

Introduction

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Not long after founding editor of *LATR*, George Woodyard, passed away, current editor Stuart Day invited me to put together a special issue of the journal for this fall. As the deadline for delivery draws nearer, I find myself marveling over the fact that George spent *forty years* reading and editing essays for *LATR*. Moreover, he performed this task while teaching, taking groups of students abroad, mentoring his doctoral students, writing prolifically, traveling to conferences and festivals, hosting five LATT conferences, serving in various administrative capacities, and being a husband, father, and finally grandfather. How did he do all that?!

George was incredibly modest. So modest, in fact, that most of us were clueless as to the extent of his scholarly productivity. George would have never allowed this, but now that he isn't here to protest, I decided to include in this issue a complete listing of his publications and editorial achievements. My hope is that current and future scholars of Latin American theatre will find the list useful as they set off on paths blazed long ago by George. The listing of editorial work calls attention to how much of George's career was devoted to selfless service to others and to the profession: editions of critical works and anthologies, prologues, the completion of a book manuscript left by a deceased colleague, to name just a few.

While George produced a number of seminal articles on canonical plays and playwrights, he was also drawn to whatever was new at the time. He loved to go to the theatre and was famous for seeing as many plays in Buenos Aires as the night permitted, returning to the hotel only after the last curtain had fallen. I believe he would have highly approved of the present selection of essays, all of which are devoted to plays and paradigms of the current millennium. Not surprisingly, those who responded to the call for essays include former students, prominent critics and acquaintances from Mexico and Argentina, and others who acknowledge the profound influence that George had on their career.

This issue revolves around the question "What's new in Latin American theatre and performance?" Accordingly, the essays deal with such things as emerg-

ing playwrights and theatre groups, nagging questions related to performance and performativity, the development of new theoretical and aesthetic paradigms, and the impact of technology and other forms of visual media on performance and the archive. Catherine Larson offers a bold response to the question of “what’s new?” by taking on the copious theoretical writing that has guided our critical thinking on theatre, performance, and performance-related questions during the past two decades. In an overview of theorists ranging from Judith Butler to Diana Taylor, Larson lays out many of the principal concepts and debates related to performance—performativity, performance studies, performance art, etc.—to illustrate how the lens through which we view theatre has evolved and how we scholars of Latin American theatre fit into the larger picture of examining the embodiment of meaning. In addition to a succinct history of contemporary theory, Larson provides a lengthy bibliography that will guide us as we continue to grapple with performance-related issues.

Like a set of Russian dolls, Jorge Dubatti’s essay provides a detailed, multilayered analysis of Argentine theatre. Starting from within the broad context of the Postdictatorship, Dubatti leads us into the current phase of post-neoliberalism—a period of national rediscovery and redefinition, internationalization, globalization, heterogeneity, hybridity, and debate. He uses *el teatro comunitario* as an example of the shift from resistance to social construction, while Ricardo Bartís’s work abroad and Daniel Veronese’s work both abroad and in commercial theatre serve to demonstrate the effects of globalization and the creation of an international audience for Argentine theatre. Dubatti’s journey from *macropoética* to *micropoética* ends with the analysis of three recent works—Romina Paula’s *El tiempo todo entero*, Manuel Santos Iñurrieta’s *Crónicas de un comediante*, and Julio Molina’s *Curupayty. El mapa no es un territorio*—analyses richly complimented by his personal interviews with dramatists and directors.

Ileana Diéguez looks at the performative function of installation art in documenting and making visible the social dramas of our times. She applies theories postulated by Turner, Agamben, Butler, Martín-Barbero, Didi-Huberman, and others to installation artists such as Erika Diettes, Teresa Margolles, Doris Salcedo, and Ambar Polidori to emphasize the role of art as social practice. By emphasizing the liminal nature of these works and their fusion of life and art, ethics, and esthetics, Diéguez reminds us of the vital role played by testimonial art, particularly in places of intense conflict and social imbalance, places where the object of mourning, the dead body, is absent. These works are at once temporary symbolic restitutions and images that live on in the collective memory as a spectral register of the here and now.

Gastón Alzate likewise visits the “outskirts” of traditional performance in his study on Mexican diva Regina Orozco and her iconoclastic blend of popular culture (*carpa*, *albur*, and *lo naco*), established musical genres (opera and cabaret), and artistic codes such as *kitsch*, *camp* and mannerism. Alzate shows how Orozco

uses these cultural and aesthetic elements as well as her own obesity to induce collective laughter and to make a mockery of the official discourse of Church and State with respect to the body, gender, and sexuality.

Paola Hernández uses Vivi Tellas's "Archivos" and Lola Arias's *Mi vida después* to examine recent documentary theatre and the way documents are being used not to authorize but rather to question their own veracity as part of the ongoing process of engaging critically with Argentina's past. Looking back on the postulates of Brecht, Boal, Weiss, and Piscator, Hernández proposes that the documentary theatre being staged today in Argentina is not as concerned with politics *per se* as it is with the role of the document itself in the staging of private, personal histories related to the Dirty War. Hernández utilizes the theories of Baudrillard, De Certeau, Schechner, Taylor, and others to show how performance—"twice-behaved behavior"—precludes not only originality but also veracity. Both Tellas and Arias break away from 20th-century documentary theatre with dramatic "remakes" that combine historical documents and artifacts with the personal "histories" of the disappeared as told by those who survived.

Leticia Robles-Moreno explores the impact of visual media on the nature of performance by describing the various levels of mediatization that occur in *Adiós Ayacucho*, ranging from Julio Ortega's original *nouvelle* to 40 years of performance by Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani, all the way to the on-line performance video housed in the archives of NYU's Hemispheric Institute. Integrating theories proposed by Taylor, Merleau-Ponty, Martín-Barbero, Ahmed, and others, Robles-Moreno suggests that spectatorship is an open-ended experience. Through the seemingly endless process of mediatization, the multiple mediums of *Adiós Ayacucho* remind us that history in its entirety remains forever beyond our grasp and that the absence of that entirety will forever haunt our individual and collective memories.

Finally, Rocío Galicia offers a broad and at the same time detailed reading of Mexico's *Teatro del Norte* through the lens of *la hipertextualidad*, a concept developed by Enrique Mijares in dramatic workshops whose participants have discovered unique ways to portray the violence, chaos, and hyperreality presently playing out throughout northern Mexico. She shows how dramatists like Jesús González Dávila, Virginia Hernández, Enrique Mijares, and others break with Aristotelian notions of linearity and binary opposition through the use of hypertextual structures and modern technologies that help them to portray the fragmentation and chaos of daily life in the violence-wrought *Norte*. The presentation of multiple options invites the audience to choose a path in a tense and complicated dramatic—and by extension, real-world—situation that offers no clear exit.

While the geographical and theoretical range of these essays precludes facile conclusions, the authors clearly suggest that the study of what we used to call simply "theatre" is now much more profound and complicated than it was in the past. Yet, while evidencing the multiplicity of current approaches to the performance arts of

Latin America, the essays reveal an overarching concern with texts and performances that question “history,” cast doubt on documents, and seek to make present those who have disappeared. At the same time, they mock and dismantle hegemonic notions of gender, normativity, and similar forms of “universal truth.” It seems significant that the majority of the essays relate to the staging of histories of violence and brutality (Diéguez, Robles-Moreno, Hernández, Galicia) over a wide geographical range (Colombia, Peru, Argentina, and Mexico). An upcoming conference on the ethics and esthetics of violence, to be held in honor of George Woodyard at the Universidad Iberoamericana, will hopefully contribute further to our understanding of violence both as a critical issue and as a performative “act.”

This issue was not meant to be an homage to George, yet his memory is inseparable from the journal. While editing the essays, I could not help but remember my days as editorial assistant and the time we spent in the *LATR* office reading galleys and comparing notes. He was a stickler on format, documentation, and things like punctuation, while his knowledge of both English and Spanish was impeccable and unassailable. I’m not George. No one can be George. But that doesn’t mean that we won’t keep trying. Meanwhile, his memory will continue to guide and inspire the future of the *Latin American Theatre Review*.

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